

MOTORIZED HAND HELD CLEANING TOOL WITH CLAMP ON EXTENSION HANDLE.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to cleaning tools, and more particularly to a hand-holdable cleaning tool having a removable clamp-on handle assembly for enabling a user to reach hard to access areas with the cleaning tool.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Hand-holdable cleaning tools have proven to be very effective and useful cleaning implements for a wide variety of cleaning tasks. In particular, motorized cleaning tools, such as the ScumBuster® hand holdable cleaning tool manufactured by the Assignee of the present application, have proven to be very popular and effective in a wide variety of cleaning applications, and especially in use in private homes such as in kitchens and bathroom areas of the home. Such motorized cleaning tools allow a user to more thoroughly scrub areas such as sinks, bathtubs, shower stalls, and a wide variety of other surfaces with the help of a motor driven brush or like cleaning implement.

[0003] With such hand held cleaning tools as described above, there is often a need to clean elevated areas or difficult to access areas which would be difficult, if not impossible, for the user to reach while holding the body (i.e., housing) of the cleaning tool itself. Accordingly, it would be desirable to provide

some form of elongated handle that could be grasped by the user so that the tool could be used to clean elevated or difficult to access areas more easily by the user. Furthermore, it would highly desirable if such a handle could be quickly and easily removed from the cleaning tool when not needed. Such a removable handle would provide significant additional flexibility to the user when using the cleaning tool in different cleaning applications.

[0004] It would further be highly desirable if such a cleaning tool as described above could be provided that does not require any modification to the housing of the cleaning tool itself, before a removable, clamp-on handle is secured thereto, and further does not add appreciably to the overall weight of the cleaning tool, or to significantly increase the overall cost of the cleaning tool.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The present invention is directed to a hand held cleaning tool having a removable elongated handle assembly for enabling the tool to reach elevated or difficult to access areas. In one preferred form the cleaning tool comprises an internally disposed motor which drives a brush or other like cleaning implement through a suitable gear reduction system. The removable handle, in one preferred form, comprises a main body portion which can be clamped on to a handle portion of a main housing of the cleaning tool. The main body portion includes structure for receiving an elongated handle member which can be easily grasped by the user once the main body portion is secured to the main housing of the cleaning tool. The user is then better able to use the

cleaning tool to reach elevated and difficult to access areas. In a preferred form, the elongated handle has a length sufficient to allow it to be comfortably grasped with two hands, thus allowing the user to easily maneuver the cleaning tool.

[0006] In a preferred form, the main body portion includes a slidably disposed locking element. The locking element is disposed over a pair of flanges formed on opposite sides of a housing of the main body portion. The locking element can be slid from an unlocked position, wherein the main body portion can be easily slipped over a handle portion of the cleaning tool, and a locked position wherein the flanges are drawn towards each other such that the main body portion is clamped over the handle portion of the cleaning tool. Thus, the main body portion can be quickly and easily mounted on the handle of the cleaning tool or removed from the cleaning tool with a single sliding motion of the locking element. Cooperating structure between the housing of the main body portion and the locking element serves to help maintain the locking element in the locked position once it is moved into this position by the user, as well as prevent the locking element from being removed entirely from the main body portion.

[0007] Further areas of applicability of the present invention will become apparent from the detailed description provided hereinafter. It should be understood that the detailed description and specific examples, while indicating the preferred embodiment of the invention, are intended for purposes of illustration only and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] The present invention will become more fully understood from the detailed description and the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0009] Figure 1 is a perspective view of a hand holdable cleaning tool incorporating a removable elongated handle assembly in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, with the handle assembly being clamped to a handle portion of the cleaning tool;

[0010] Figure 2 is a side view of the apparatus of Figure 1 but with the clamp-on handle assembly in the open position being ready to be removed from the cleaning tool;

[0011] Figure 3 is a perspective view of a main body portion of the handle assembly of Figure 1;

[0012] Figure 4 is an end view of the main body portion of the handle assembly of Figure 3 with the handle assembly in the locked position;

[0013] Figure 5 is an end view of the handle assembly of Figure 4 but with the main body portion thereof in the open position;

[0014] Figure 6 is a side view of just the main body portion of the handle assembly of Figure 4 (i.e., with a locking element thereof removed for clarity);

[0015] Figure 7 is a side view of the main body portion of the handle assembly in the slightly open position illustrating structure associated therewith for retaining the locking element in its open and closed positions;

[0016] Figure 8 is a perspective view of the locking element of the handle assembly shown in Figures 1 and 2;

[0017] Figure 9 is a partial cross-sectional view of the locking element in its locked position, taken in accordance with section line 9-9 in Figure 4;

[0018] Figure 10 is a cross-sectional view of the locking element of Figure 9 but with the locking element moved to its unlocked position;

[0019] Figure 11 is a perspective view of an alternative preferred embodiment of the clamp-on handle assembly of the present invention;

[0020] Figure 12 is a perspective view of another alternative preferred embodiment of the clamp-on handle assembly of the present invention; and

[0021] Figure 13 is a perspective view of the cleaning tool of Figure 1 hanging on a hanger.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0022] The following description of the preferred embodiment(s) is merely exemplary in nature and is in no way intended to limit the invention, its application, or uses.

[0023] Referring to Figures 1 and 2, there is shown a cleaning tool 10 in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. Cleaning tool 10 includes a clamp-on handle assembly 12. The cleaning tool 10 can be used to access elevated or difficult to reach areas. The cleaning tool incorporates a main housing 14 within which is disposed an electric motor 16. The electric motor 16 is coupled to a gear reduction unit 18 which rotationally

drives a scrub brush or other like cleaning implement 20. The electric motor 16 is powered by a rechargeable battery pack 22 held within a handle portion 24 of the housing 14. An on/off switch 26 is used to apply electric power to the motor 16 to thus turn on and off the cleaning tool 10.

[0024] With specific reference to Figure 2, the clamp-on handle assembly 12 includes a main body portion 28 having a neck 30 to which an elongated handle member 31 can be coupled. The handle member 31 can be secured to the neck 30 via adhesives or mechanical means such as by providing the handle member with a threaded end and an internal bore 30a of the neck 30 with threads for threaded engagement with the threaded portion of the handle member. Alternatively, it may be secured by a press fit or by a bayonet fitting.

[0025] The main body portion 28 of the clamp on handle assembly 12 further includes a slidably disposed locking element 32. The locking element 32 is shown in its "locked" position in Figure 2, in its "unlocked" position in phantom in Figure 2, and in perspective in Figure 8. In the locked position, the handle assembly 12 is securely clamped over the handle portion 24 of the main housing 14 of the cleaning tool 10. When in the unlocked position, the handle assembly 12 can be lifted from the handle portion 24, as will be described further in the following paragraphs.

[0026] Figures 3-6 further illustrate just the main body portion 28 of the handle assembly 12. The main body portion 28 can be seen to include a first portion 34 and a second portion 36 coupled by a living hinge 38. First portion 34 further includes a flange 40 while second portion 36 similarly includes a flange

42. The flanges 40 and 42 are disposed along free edges 44 and 46 of the portions 34 and 36, respectively.

[0027] With brief reference specifically to Figure 6, portion 34 further can be seen to include an extending portion 48 having a small projection 50. The main body portion 28 is integrally formed with the neck portion 30 preferably as a single molded component part from the suitably strong material such as high strength plastic. The living hinge 38 allows portions 34 and 36 to be easily moved between the closed and open positions shown in Figures 4 and 5, respectively.

[0028] With specific reference to Figures 4 and 5, the main housing portion 28 further forms a bore 52 having a longitudinally extending groove or channel 54. Channel 54 is adapted to receive a longitudinally extending rib 55 (Figures 1 and 2) that helps to maintain the main body portion 28 in a desired orientation when secured to the handle portion 24 of the cleaning tool 10. As will also be appreciated, the bore 52 is sized such that it is able to fit over the handle portion 24 without play when the main body portion 28 is clamped to the handle portion 24.

[0029] With further reference to Figure 7, the projection 50 can be seen in even greater detail. The projection 50 is formed to reside slightly below flange 42. The projection 50 assists in holding the locking element 32 both in its locked position and in its unlocked position, as will be described momentarily.

[0030] Referring to Figure 8, the locking element 32 can be seen in greater detail. The locking element 32 includes a pair of inwardly turned ledges

56 and 58. Ledge 56 has a first notch 60 and a second notch 62. First notch 60 assists in maintaining the locking element 32 secured to the main body portion 28 of the handle assembly 12 when the locking element 32 is in its unlocked position (Figure 5). Notch 62, conversely, holds the locking element 32 in its locked position as shown in Figure 1.

[0031] With reference to Figures 9 and 10, the locking element 32 can be seen in its locked orientation (Figure 9) and in its unlocked orientation (Figure 10). In its locked orientation, notch 62 receives the projection 50. In the unlocked position of Figure 10, notch 60 receives the projection 50. To place the clamp assembly 12 onto the handle portion 24 of the tool 10, the user opens the locking element 32 into the position shown in phantom in Figure 2, opens the second portion 36 of the main housing 28 as shown in Figure 5, and places the main housing 28 over the handle portion 24 so that the main housing 28 is aligned with a longitudinal axis of the handle portion 24. The user then moves portions 34 and 36 towards each other until flanges 40 and 42 are closely adjacent one another or almost in abutting relationship, as shown in Figure 4. The user then slides the locking element 32 forwardly over the flanges 40 and 42 into the position shown in Figures 1 and 3. Stops 40a and 42a shown in Figures 1, 3, 6, 9 and 10 stop forward movement of the locking element 32 just as the second notch 62 engages with the projection 50. In this position the handle assembly 2 is securely clamped to the handle portion 24 of the tool and the cleaning tool 10 can be manipulated easily by the user using one or both hands to grasp the elongated handle member 31 and maneuver the cleaning tool 10.

[0032] To remove the handle assembly 12, the steps are essentially reversed. The user simply slides the locking element 32 rearwardly into the position shown in phantom in Figure 2. The locking element 32 will initially take a slight degree more force to begin its longitudinal travel as the projection 50 is urged out of notch 62. After this occurs, the locking element 32 can be moved more easily until the projection 50 is urged into engagement with notch 60, which again will take a slight degree of additional force to accomplish. Once projection 50 is engaged with notch 60, as shown in Figure 10, the locking element cannot be moved any further longitudinally in the unlocking direction without significant additional force. Thus, the inter-engagement of the projection 50 and the notch 60 prevents the locking element 32 from being inadvertently removed from the main body portion 28. The extending portion 48 forms a surface which also helps to support the locking element 32 when it is in its unlocked position shown in Figure 10.

[0033] The clamp-on handle assembly 12 thus forms a convenient and easy to use means for allowing an auxiliary extension handle to be secured to a handle portion of a cleaning tool. The handle assembly 12 of the present invention does not add appreciably to the overall weight of the combined handle assembly/cleaning tool combination, does not add appreciably to the overall cost of the combined assembly, and enables a user to reach elevated areas or other areas that would be difficult to access while holding on directly to the handle portion 24 of the cleaning tool 10 shown in Figures 1 and 2. In addition, the use of the handle assembly 12 does not necessitate the use of an auxiliary on/off

switch for the tool 10 since the handle assembly does not interfere with access to the on/off switch 26 of the tool 10, and the on/off switch 26 is still conveniently accessible by the user.

[0034] Referring now to Figure 11, an alternative preferred embodiment 100 of the clamp-on handle assembly of the present invention is shown. This embodiment is similar to clamp-on handle assembly 12 but with the exception that a main body portion 102 of the assembly 100 is clamped around not only the upper handle portion 24 of the cleaning tool 14, but also a lower handle guard member 15 of the cleaning tool that defines the opening through which the fingers of a user's hand extend.

[0035] Referring to Figure 12, yet another alternative preferred embodiment 200 of the clamp-on handle assembly is illustrated. This embodiment is similar to handle assembly 100 except that a main body portion 202 clamps over the entire upper handle portion 24 and lower handle guard member 15 of the cleaning tool 14.

[0036] Referring now to Figure 13, the cleaning tool 14 can be seen hanging from a hanger 300. Hanger 300 is preferably formed from plastic and includes a base portion 302 having a hook 304 and a neck 306. Neck 306 can be used to support a removable end cap 17 of the cleaning tool 14. The base portion 302 can be secured to a wall or other like surface by any suitable fastening element, for example a threaded fastener, that extends through the hook 304 and the base portion 302.

[0037] The description of the invention is merely exemplary in nature and, thus, variations that do not depart from the gist of the invention are intended to be within the scope of the invention. Such variations are not to be regarded as a departure from the spirit and scope of the invention.